

Ad 'printaculars' under scrutiny

Advertisers rap rivals' gimmicks

By Scott Donaton
and Pat Sloan

Marketers and publishers are divided over how to deal with growing criticism about scent strips, heavy inserts and other methods used to break through magazine ad clutter.

Readers have criticized the scents that rise from some books, and advertisers or agencies have become upset when unusual devices obscure their own efforts.

Some publishers are giving in to pressure to scrutinize such ads and notify other advertisers they're running. Others aren't so sure.

All agree, however, that the issue is one of increasing importance that must be addressed, especially by perfume and liquor marketers.

"There's great concern in the liquor category because some advertisers are running 'printaculars' [spectacular print ads], and those running regular page ads want to be notified," said W. Randall Jones, publisher of Esquire. "But I'm not sure that's appropriate."

Mr. Jones said he hasn't yet decided on a notification policy.

Other publishers said several agencies and advertisers are asking to be notified when any spectacular inserts—such as heavy-stock, multipage ads, musicals; and pop-ups—will run.

One agency, MacNamara, Clapp & Klein, New York, recently made a formal written request to magazine ad sales reps asking for such

notification. MacNamara said upon notification, it will decide whether to keep its clients in the issue.

"MacNamara, Clapp & Klein had a valid point," said Steven Greenberg, publisher of Fame. "If we put things in the magazine, such as inserts, they can alter its appearance."

Mr. Greenberg said he'd reject

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any insert he considered "obnoxious" and will honor requests for notification when bulky inserts are scheduled to run.

Several publishers and agency executives have cited a recent 20-page, heavy-stock insert for Porsche Cars North America, via Fallon McElligott, Minneapolis, as an example that angered readers and advertisers.

"The inserts have the ability to change the entire feel of the magazine," said Frank MacNamara, coo of MacNamara, Clapp & Klein. "You'll always flip immediately to that insert, which cuts down the possibility of other ads being seen."

MacNamara, whose clients in-

clude Whitbread North America's Beefeater gin and Fleischmann Distilling Co.'s Denaka vodka, may have reason to worry.

Liquor marketers, led by Carillon Importers for Absolut vodka, have blitzed the marketplace in recent years with high-tech ads and inserts.

Holiday ads this year included a talking ad for Absolut via TBWA; a 3-D

hologram ad for Palace Brands' Finlandia vodka via Young & Rubicam; and a peel-and-stick ad for Jos. E. Seagram & Sons' Crown Royal whiskey via DDB Needham Worldwide (AA, Nov. 6).

"These ads are effective as long as they're not offensive," said Carillon President Michel Roux. "There's always somebody who'll criticize what you're doing."

Although admitting heavy inserts affect other ads, J. Walter Thompson USA's Richard Kostyra said a backlash against creative ads could be dangerous.

"Such concerns limit creativity," said Mr. Kostyra, exec VP-U.S. director of worldwide media services at the agency. "I don't think advertising should be brought down to a common standard where everybody just buys pages."

But other agency executives

said not scrutinizing such ads can be equally harmful.

"Where do you draw the line between what's creative and what might destroy the reader's relationship to the magazine?" asked Nancy Smith, senior VP-director of media services at Y&R. "You have to be careful because some things might be intimidating to the reader."

The cosmetics industry has also come under fire in recent months. In fact, complaints about scent strips are forcing the birth of new technologies that would protect allergic readers from perfumed ads and allow magazines to carry more scent-strip inserts per issue.

TV Guide, for example, decided it will no longer carry scented inserts after it received "hundreds of letters of protest" about a scent-strip ad for Coty's Iron cologne it carried last June, said Mary Berner, ad director

Ms. Berner said she would reconsider carrying such ads if effective leak-proof technologies are introduced.

In addition, early last month, New York state Sen. Martin Connor (D, Staten Island) held a public hearing on a bill that would require fragrance samples in magazines to be protected by odor-proof sealants.

Industry executives say new technologies are on the way to correct scent leakage.

"What you'll see are new constructions and designs such as triple-scent and double-scent pull sleeves, so that instead of just ripping apart an insert, you actually have to rip and then pull the sample out of the insert," said George Lane, Webcraft marketing manager.

Whether that will raise the cost of the inserts remains to be seen. []



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